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Lez Zeppelin

Nicole Boddinatton

Updated: 7/12/2007



LEZ ZEPPELIN: Tribute band got the Led out in Little Rock.

up for the opener "Immigrant Song." Instead of mimicking Robert Plant's high-pitched howl ("ahh-ahh-ahh-ah"), McLellan went for a guttural Joss Stone-like moan. Early on, as she delivered the familiar first lines ("We come from the land of the ice and snow/from the midnight sun where the hot springs blow"), it became apparent that McLellan couldn't hear herself, and the little vocals we could hear sounded flat and off-key. Before going into their next song, McLellan and guitarist Steph Paynes asked for more vocals in their monitors, a frustrating request they'd make several more times during their hour-and-a-half show.

After playing a few recognizable rockers, they slowed it down for "Since I've Been Loving You," a bluesy ballad that matched McLellan's range and style much more than the up-tempo numbers. On this one, Paynes shined. Having removed her button-down shirt, opting for a thin white tank only, she showed off toned biceps as she plucked her guitar through the swaying solo.

Bassist Lisa Brigatino led into the languid "Dazed into Confused." Full of longing, McLellan's soulful voice sent the audience swooning. Whistles arose as she whimpered: "Gonna love you baby, here I come again." At what appeared to be the song's end, the band left Paynes alone onstage. Guitar at her hips, she tossed her pick and brushed a bow over the strings, slowly at first, then building faster and faster. Making her way across the stage with the swagger and self-love of the classic rock 'n' roller she copied, Paynes (as Jimmy Page) scanned the crowd, locking eyes and exchanging seductive stares with members of the audience. After her sexed-up solo, she was accompanied onstage for the conclusion of "Dazed and Confused," during which the music swelled: drums rumbled, bass throbbled, guitar bent and McLellan whined.

For the next number, Brigatino took up a mandolin and Paynes grabbed an acoustic guitar for an original song off the band's new album. As the two women sat down on opposite ends of the stage, an unsettling — seemingly underground — sound interrupted the show. The sound crew fumbled with wires and microphones onstage. Annoyed by their inability to resolve the situation quickly, Paynes told the crew to kill the mic McLellan had been using. The sound subsided; the show continued.

When the band returned, McLellan picked up Paynes' mic and for the first time that night, her voice came across clearly and loudly, easily making "In My Time of Dying," which came nine songs into their 10-song set, the best song of the night. After an instrumental interlude, they followed with the grandiose "Kashmir," on which drummer Helen Destroy gave an intensely physical performance. Their set list suggested a two-song encore that ended with "Whole Lotta Love," but they left us with only "Rock 'n' Roll" as a closer to a strong show that could've soared if it had been supported by a quality sound system and a crew that knew how to use it.

New York's all-girl Led Zeppelin tribute band, Lez Zeppelin, gave Little Rock's Rev Room a little love last Friday night — despite being plagued by sound problems throughout their set. Looking the part, lead singer Sarah McLellan wore her long red-blond hair in loose curls that circled her bare shoulders and rolled down her back. Her brown suede vest was cropped at her chest. A big belt hung at her hips, which she rocked to the rhythm of the drums as they picked



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